

Arecibo Light
(Faro de Los Morillos de Arecibo)
Punta Morillos
Arecibo
Puerto Rico

HAER No. PR-13

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Arecibo Light
(Faro de los Morrillos de Arecibo)

PR-13

Location: On Point Morrillos, on the east side of the entrance to the Port of Arecibo, approximately 34 miles west of San Juan, Puerto Rico
Position: 18° 29' N - 66° 41.9' W

Date of Erection: 1897-98

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Coast Guard

Original Owner: Central Lighthouse Commission
Colonial Public Works Office
Harbor and Port Section
Government of Spain

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: From seaward, the lighthouse is projected against the Central Mountain Range, and seats on a black sandstone hill. It was built between 1897 and 1898 as a 3rd order lighthouse with an 18 mile range fixed white light.

The basic original structure stands today as erected at the end of the century. It consists of a rectangular building (25.64 mts x 12.30 mts) with an hexagonal tower attached to its north facade (approx. 15 mts high including lantern and cupola). The dwelling has its main entrance on the south facade and once gave way to a 5.6 x 4.9 x 4.5 mts. hall which led to the tower entrance through a 6 x 2 mts. corridor. At both sides of the corridor there were two doors which connected, on the west, to the old engineer's room, and on the east, to the old storeroom. The door connecting to the tower was located four steps above the corridor's ground level. The tower's interior is cylindrical with a 2.5 mts. diameter. The rest of the structure was divided into two separated units which served as living quarters for 1st and 3rd class light keepers. The common vestibule

or hall led, on both east and west, to a spacious 5 x 4.7 mts. living room. Each living room opened to two bedrooms approximately 3.28 x 4 x 4.5 mts. Two identical rooms were located on the NE and NW corners of the building that served as kitchen-dining areas. The bathrooms were located at the end of the two corridors.

Each room had a wood double-pane casement approximately 1.2 x 2.5 mts., with the exception of the rooms at each corner which had two.

Underneath the tower there was a basement that served as the oil room. Halfway up the tower --by way of a cast-iron winding stairway-- a window opened to the north, and a door to the south opened to the building's roof. The roof was formed by superimposed and alternatively layed layers of brick and mortar sustained by large iron-wood beams and lattice. It was divided into four large sections, each one with a different inclination for water collection into a nearby cistern.

The tower ended in a cast-iron, copper, and glass lantern that had a cemented gallery surrounded by a cast-iron balustrade.

The original illuminating apparatus was a 3rd order, lenticular, 1897 Paris' Barbier & Bernard lens, 1 mt. in diameter, with 5 panels. There were 7 panels in the central drum; and 9 below. It was supported by an iron pedestal. The tower and dwelling were originally painted white with lead-gray trimmings. The materials used were rubble masonry, brick, stone, and lime mortar. The floor was covered with white and gray Genoa marble slabs, except the keepers quarters which were floored with wood planks.

In 1930 the light characteristic was changed to F. 20s. One year later the IOV system was replaced by an electric lamp which was curiously hooked to a windmill. In 1964 the light was automated and in 1977 the light characteristic was again changed.

In 1959, some major structural changes were made: the walls separating the original bedrooms and kitchens, the engineer's and storeroom's were remodeled to give way to modern bathroom facilities. Also, the old brick roof was replaced by a reinforced-concrete one.

After the lighthouse was automated the structure was abandoned, and quickly became the victim of decay, ruin, and vandalism. Between 29 October 1969 and 28 October 1977 the lighthouse was seriously vandalized 16 times. In 1975 damage was done to the classic lens, and in 1977 almost all of the lantern and the entire French lenticular lens were destroyed.

The building is partially in ruins; nevertheless, some marble slabs remain in the floor and part of an old wooden door hangs on its original hinges. Some decorative elements remain in place: the simple cornice of the main building, the tower cornice and its rectangular brackets, and the curved main entrance cornice. But windows and doors have been removed, and even chunks of brick and mortar have been torn from walls.

One of the last lighthouses built in order to complete the original lighthouse plan as designed. Compared with the other lighthouses, it is simple and elegant in its less decorated, proportioned way and reflects very well Spanish colonial neo-classicism. Its craftsmanship is obvious, as particularly shown by its brick work. Arecibo light finally completed the Cabo San Juan-Puerto San Juan trilogy which lighted the Island's northern shore.

Transmitted by:

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